

# Parks Comprehensive Plan Task Force

## Meeting Summary March 21, 2007

**Task Force members present:** R.D. Brown, Chuck Evens, Steve Gordon, Maggie Lindorfer, John O'Connell, Brian Pelc, Pete Regnier, Kathy Schubert, Carrie Wasley, Jenny Winkelman

**Members absent:** Erick Goodlow (excused), Victor Vang

**Staff:** Bob Bierscheid, Vince Gillespie, Mike Hahm, Rich Lallier, Jess Rosenfeld, Ruth Schumi, Eric Thompson, Jason Wirka

**Panelists:** Greg Pye, Margot Fehrenbacher, Eric Thompson

### **Eric Thompson, Director of Security**

There are two ways to look at safety in parks: (1) the perception of safety that lets people be free to do what they want, and (2) physical hazards. Perception of safety is a quality of life issue; people won't use parks if they feel vulnerable in them. Vulnerability can be minimized with a visible security presence and good signage and park design. Parks, trails, and connections are generally safe from a hazards standpoint. Maintenance crews fix problems, and parks security officers patrol trails to monitor for other hazards.

#### Parks Security:

- relatively small staff of 6 employees
- 3 cars now (and a 4<sup>th</sup> coming soon)
- wear uniforms, but unarmed
- not sworn police officers, but carry police radios and stay in contact w/ dispatch
- no arrest authority, but have new tagging authority to deal w/ illegal parking, off-leash dogs, failure to remove feces
- security covers more than just people – also responsible for protecting parks assets (key responsibility is securing parks system every night)

#### Safety Issues:

- not a lot of statistical information on incidence of public safety issues
- incidence and type of issues fluctuate seasonally (e.g. in the summer there are problems with illegal vendors on parks property)
- identification of problems can come from the citizen complaint line, City Council members, direct phone calls/email, etc.
- recreation centers are visited twice a year, but security staff would like to have more of a presence and is working with Kathy Korum to try to figure out how to do this

- cameras and other technologies are currently used at some parks facilities; emergency phones are not used
- concerns about changing demographics and ability of parks security officers to respond and communicate effectively
- shared paths/trails are an area of concern

### **Margot Fehrenbacher, Planning and Economic Development Department, CPTED**

Saint Paul's Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) program has been in place since 1993, and it currently applies to all new design and development projects downtown, often through negotiations during the site plan review process. CPTED improves safety by applying design principles to the environment rather than focusing on hard security measures. Some of the issues that CPTED addresses include visibility (spaces should be well-lit, easily visible to police, with no hidden corners), mobility (movement predictors should be avoided, and there should be multiple routes and choices), and readability (people need to know where they are and where they are going). The perception of safety, gained through environmental cues, results in real safety that lessens the need for enforcement staff. It is important for CPTED to be applied early in the design process, before plans become difficult to change. Retrofitting old facilities is also possible, but can be very difficult and costly.

### **Greg Pye, Police Department**

Saint Paul's parks are generally very safe. Thefts (and thefts from auto) are the biggest issue in parks. Education is an important part of preventing this crime – individuals should be responsible for protecting themselves by not leaving properties unattended or in plain view.

### **Comp Plan Implications:**

- The plan needs a general policy statement on the use of technology.
- Increasing the use of cameras in parks facilities should be explored further, so concerns about intrusions on privacy can be weighed against effectiveness; public review is key.
- The plan should call for better statistical info on crimes in parks – like an annual analysis of public safety/crime trends to review staffing needs, etc. A systematic, data-driven system should be developed to track safety issues.
- Increased tagging authority for parks security staff for issues like alcohol consumption, illegal dumping may be desirable.
- The plan should include the possibility of using volunteers in some security roles.
- The plan should recommend that CPTED principles should be applied to parks design projects, including retrofits. Parks design projects should aim to involve CPTED staff early in process.
- Community input and communications on matters of public safety should be emphasized in the plan – beef up Policy 30 in plan to emphasize gathering neighborhood input. People should know how to effectively report public safety issues, and parks security staff should routinely reach out to the community.
- Asset protection should be emphasized.

- Comp Plan's organization on safety issues should be evaluated. Safety issues appear in multiple places in the plan, but under different headings.
- Trail policies should recommend the separation of uses, where feasible.
- Where public safety is mentioned in the plan (like under Objective 7), crime prevention should be added.

**NEXT MEETING:** May 16th, 4 – 7 p.m., at the Linwood Recreation Center.